

THE CAUSES OF HUMILIATION IN 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY SELECT NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

The present research paper discusses the concept 'humiliation'. It studies the causes of humiliation referring the novels of 18th and 19th century namely Candide (1759), The Castle of Otranto (1764), Jane Eyre (1857) and The Turn of the Screw (1898), written by Francois Marie Arouet Do Voltaire (French Novelist, 1694-1778), Horace Walpoles (British Novelist, 1714-1797), Chorlotte Bronte (British Novelist, 1816 – 1855) and Henry James (American Dramatist, 1843-1916). It ends with the conclusion that though the countries, cultures, languages, ages, identities, etc. vary; though the causes vary; the impact remains unique and that is humiliation.

KEYWORDS: Age, Sex, Region, Culture, Language, Identity, Etc

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INTRODUCTION

Humiliation embarks since the very beginning of the existence of human beings on the planet Earth. It exists irrespective of the barriers - age, sex, region, culture, language, identity, etc. It is both: humiliating someone or being humiliated. Humiliation causes to lose one's prestige or self respect. The synonyms for the word 'humiliation' are:

"Embarrassment, mortification, shame, indignity, ignominy, disgrace, dishonor, discomfiture, degradation, discredit, obloquy, opprobrium, loss of pride, loss of face, affront, insult, rebuff, snub, put-down, blow to one's pride, slap in the face, smack in the face, kick in the teeth, brush-off, disesteem, reprobation, vitiation, etc."

(<https://www.google.co.in/search?scilient=psyab&site=&source=hp&btnG=Search&q=humiliation>, 19-09-2015)

Bullying, dehumanization, schadenfreude, self-abasement, social defeat, etc. are the other names of the humiliation. Humiliation is of different types - social, emotional, psychological, sexual, political, economical, etc. The caste variation, superstitions, illiteracy, gender difference, physical disability, ego, salary, border disputes, state disputes, conflicts, generation gap, govt. rules, childlessness, dowry, etc. cause humiliation. One's weariness, nervousness, frustration, disturbance, hopelessness, irrationalism, negative environment, absence of something, failure in forming meaningful relationships, etc. result in absurdity and that also cause humiliation. Quarrels, disputes, wars, bloodsheds, murders, suicides, rapes, dacoits, etc. are the impacts of humiliation.

The following are some definitions of humiliation:

“Humiliation is the abasement of pride, which creates mortification or leads to a state of being humbled or reduced to lowliness or submission.” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humiliation>, 16.11.2015)

“Erotic humiliation is consensual psychological humiliation in order to produce erotic excitement or sexual arousal.” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humiliation_\(BDSM\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humiliation_(BDSM)), 16.11.2015) “Humiliating - Liable to humiliate, degrade, shame or embarrass someone.” (<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/humiliating>, 16.11.2015) “Humiliate - To injure a person's dignity and self-respect.” (<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/humiliate>, 16.11.2015)

The causes of humiliation have been studied with reference to the novels of 18th and 19th century namely *Candide* (1759), *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), *Jane Eyre* (1857) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), written by Francois Marie Arouet Do Voltaire (French Novelist, 1694-1778), Horace Walpoles (British Novelist, 1714-1797), Chorlotte Bronte (British Novelist, 1816 – 1855) and Henry James (American Dramatist, 1843-1916) respectively.

Francois Marie Arouet Do Voltaire (French Novelist, 1694-1778) delineates Miss Cunegonda's humiliation in the novel *Candide* (1759)

Loneliness causes humiliation. Bulgar's army kills Cunegonda's parents and makes her lonely which leads to her humiliation. Bulgarian army rapes her. Number of men exploits her. They make her slave. They make her their mistress. Bulgar's captain first takes her and then sells to Jewish banker, Don Issachar. Don Issachar and the Grand Inquisitor share her. Because of continuous suffering, she becomes ugly. Her humiliation is only because of her loneliness and no support of anybody else.

Blind faith upon optimistic views causes humiliation. Cunegonda keeps faith upon the optimistic views of Dr. Pangloss, i.e.

“Everything is for the best.”

(<https://www.goodreads.com/ebooks/download/19380.Candide>: 18.11.2015, 18)

But in real world, she suffers a lot by keeping a blind faith upon such optimistic views. Dr. Pangloss and Candide believe optimism but they meet many misfortunes. They are robbed and beaten. They witness rapes, robberies, deaths, murders, unjust executions, diseases, wars, pirates, shipments, etc. They experienced cruelty, lack of humanity and indifference. Finally, Dr. Pangloss is forced to admit that he does not believe his previous optimistic statements.

Meaningless philosophical speculations cause humiliation. Dr. Pangloss' philosophy does not base upon any real world evidence and is meaningless which cause humiliation. When James is drowning in the sea, Dr. Pangloss stops Candide from saving James and instead tells him that:

“Theroadstead of Lisbon had been made on purpose for the Anabaptist to be drowned there.”

(<https://www.goodreads.com/ebooks/download/19380.Candide>: 18.11.2015, 16)

When Candide is caught under the debris of earthquake, instead of saving him, he demands oil and wine. This is a meaningless philosophy which causes humiliation.

Possession of money causes humiliation. When Candide gets money in Eldorado, he is humiliated. His money attracts false friends and he is cheated by Vanderdendur. Count Pocourante's wealth causes him humiliation.

Religious difference or fanatic attitude causes humiliation. Grand Inquisitor and Don Issachar are killed. The society offers grand funeral to Grand Inquisitor but the people in the same society throws the body of Don Issachar in to the gutter because he is Jew. This religious difference or fanatic attitude humiliates him.

Inferior social and economical status cause humiliation. Candide belongs to inferior social and economical status. Candide is commoner. He is not from royal family. Therefore, Baron's son opposes for his marriage with Cunegonda. This shows his humiliation.

Horace Walpoles (British Novelist, 1714-1797) shows the humiliation of Conrad, Issabel, Theodore, Matilda, etc. by Manfred, a Prince of Otranto, in his *The Castle of Otranto* (Gothic Novel, 1764).

Prophecy causes humiliation. Manfred becomes mad and irrational because of the prophecy that if there is no male heir, then there would be no ownership of the Castle of Otranto that took him to humiliate others.

Impatience causes humiliation. Manfred is impatient to marry his son with Vicenza's daughter, Isabella to get a right heir to the throne but unfortunately, his son dies on the eve of marriage. Therefore, without knowing his wife and Isabella's wish, he declares to divorce his wife and marry Isabella which cause them humiliation and loss.

Villainy, cruelty and tyranny cause humiliation. Manfred is a villain, cruel and tyrant. To meet his desires, he does not care his wife, neighbors, tenants, subjects and even the ancient prophecy that:

"The castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it."

(www.fullbook.com/The-Castle-of-Otranto1.html: 21.10.2015)

He does all the cruel things that he can do to reach his goal. He succeeds to marry Conrad with Isabella but as unfortunately, Conrad dies, he declares to marry Isabella and bullies all domestics. He arrests Theodore by using preposterous sentences, a true heir of the Castle of Otranto. The moment, Isabella escapes from his custody, he tries to kill her and by mistake, kills Matilda, his own daughter, considering Isabella. All have been humiliated by his villainy, cruelty and tyranny.

Cunningness and shamelessness cause humiliation. Manfred is cunning and shameless person. When his son Conrad dies, he thinks, the child is puny child and tells Isabella:

"My foolish fondness for that boy blinded the eyes of my prudence – but it is better as it is. I hope, in a few years, to have reason to rejoice at the death of Conrad."

(www.fullbook.com/The-Castle-of-Otranto1.html: 21.10.2015)

This expresses his selfishness to marry Isabella to get male heir. When Isabella escapes, he not only asks his wife for divorce but also orders her to find Isabella so that he can marry her. He orders Jerome, the father of Theodore, to seize Isabella to save his son's life. All this shows his cunningness and shamelessness causing humiliation to others.

Usurpation causes humiliation. Alfonso, is the true owner of the Castle of Otranto but Ricardo, the grandfather of Manfred, humiliates Alfonso, usurps the throne by poisoning him.

Innocence, straightforwardness and truthfulness cause humiliation. Theodore, the true heir of the Castle of Otranto, at the outset, a peasant, confesses to Manfred that the miraculous helmet comes to the ground and crushes his son and that:

“The miraculous helmet was exactly like that on the figure in black marble of Alfonso the Good, one of their former princes, in the church of St. Nicholas”.

(<http://www.fullbooks.com/The-Castle-of-Otranto1.html>: 21.10.2015)

Theodore here is innocent, straightforward and truthful but Manfred calls him magician and puts him in prison without food, which is the humiliation of Theodore. Theodore is noble. He helps Isabella to escape from castle and frankly tells the same to Manfred. When Manfred threatens, he replies:

“I have done a good deed in delivering the Princess from thy tyranny. May she be happy, whatever becomes of me!”

(<http://www.fullbooks.com/The-Castle-of-Otranto1.html>, 21.10.2015)

Manfred humiliates him and orders to separate his head from body.

Sins cause humiliation. Frederic and Theodore are the rightful heirs of the castle but it has been usurped by Manfred's predecessors. Therefore, Manfred has to pay for that. His son dies under the miraculous helmet. He mistakenly kills his daughter. There is no any sin of son and daughter but they are humiliated and made to die by the sins of predecessors.

Charlotte Bronte (British Novelist, 1816 – 1855) in her novel *Jane Eyre* (1857) shows heroine's humiliation by her aunt Mrs. Reed, her children and servants who torture and also lock her in the red room in which her uncle is died.

State of being orphan causes humiliation. Jane Eyre is orphan. Her parents are died. Jane's uncle, Mr. Reed, brings her to his home. Mr. Reed also dies. She stands alone. Nobody stands by her. Mrs. Reed, her children and servants humiliate her. They often lock her in the room wherein her uncle is died. Her state of being orphan is the reason for her torture and humiliation.

Playing with feelings causes humiliation. Rochester starts loving Jane but he plays with her feelings. At one side, he shows that he loves her and at the other side, he shows that he wishes to marry Miss Ingram. Heartlessly, he breaks her heart and later tries to console her. It is her humiliation in real sense.

Treachery causes humiliation. Rochester is a treacherous person. He is a married man. Without disclosing his first marriage, he forwards to trap and marry poor girl, Jane. His treachery becomes a reason for her humiliation.

Madness causes humiliation. Mr. Rochester is a rich man but he is unhappy. The reason for his unhappiness is his mad wife, Bertha Rochester. He goes from one company to another in search of happiness in the company of mistresses. He likes Jane. He proposes her for marriage but just before marriage ceremony, she comes to know about his mad wife. So, she rejects his proposal. He becomes so sad and says:

“Jane! Jane!” he said, in such an accent of bitter sadness it thrilled along every nerve I had; “you don’t love me, then? It was only my station, and the rank of my wife, that you valued? Now that you think me disqualified to become your husband, you recoil from my touch as if I were some toad or ape.”

(https://www.goodreads.com/ebooks/download/10210.Jane_Eyre: 18.11.2015, 334)

Bartha Rochester’s madness becomes the cause of Mr. Rochester’s humiliation.

Miles and Flora, orphan nephew and niece of the employer, from *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) a novel by Henry James (American Dramatist, 1843-1916) are humiliated by their Governess which cause death to Miles and illness to Flora.

Obstinateness and selfishness cause humiliation. Governess is obstinate and selfish. When she encounters the ghost of Miss Jessel, she concludes that Flora has also seen the ghost, only because the girl was with her. When she finds, Flora is not in home, she concludes that she has gone to meet ghost. She thinks that:

“Quint and the boy (Miles) had been perpetually together.”

(https://www.goodreads.com/ebooks/download/12948.The_Turn_of_the_Screw: 18.11.2015, 48)

Mrs. Grose and Miles tell her to call employer to resolve the problem at home but she refuses, even though she knows that they are true. She does not want to spoil her image in the mind of employer with whom she has fallen in love. This all goes to the humiliation of Miles and Flora.

Inability to express desires and strange obsessive behaviour cause humiliation. Governess is unable to express her desires. She is disturbed. Her behaviour becomes strange and obsessive. She humiliates Miles and Flora. She projects sexual repression on them. She suffocates Miles which goes to his death and Flora is terrified heavily by her behaviour.

Sexual repression causes humiliation. Governess is sexually starved. Her sexual repression takes her to neurotic disorder which causes her humiliation.

Infatuation causes humiliation. Governess is infatuated by her employer. She accepts job not because she is interested in it but because she is impressed by his charming personality. She takes care of the children to find her employer happy. Governess sleeps alone with restlessness during the night. Her restlessness indicates her frustrated desire for her absent employer. Her habit of walking in night also indicates her frustrated desire. In this way, her infatuation causes humiliation.

Ones company leads to others humiliation. Miles and Flora are innocent children. They are looked after by their uncle who stays away from them. Therefore, he puts them under the care of servants. The servants like Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are immoral. Staying with them, the children acquaint certain bad qualities, i.e., stealing, lying, using vulgar words, etc. Governess never shows tenderness towards Miles and Flora. She always accuses them. She never tries to enhance their confidence and reform them. She fills fear in their minds. This results into Flora’s fear that Governess’s strange obsessive behaviour will haunt her forever and Miles death. The company of servants causes the humiliation of Miles and Flora.

CONCLUSIONS

It is to conclude that though the authors are from different countries, cultures, languages, ages, identities, etc; though these literary creations carry different backgrounds, stories, characters, etc; though the causes of humiliation differ;

the unique impact hovers and that is humiliation.

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